

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD UNITE!

December 26, 1991 VOL. 33 NO. 52



MACHINE POLITICS

50¢

*Yeltsin, Gorbachev and the
other pro-capitalist politicians
in the USSR.*

Analysis by Sam Marcy 10



Who killed JFK?

By Deirdre Griswold

The writer was Executive Secretary of the Citizen's Committee of Inquiry in 1964-65. The committee conducted the first independent investigation of the Kennedy assassination.

Oliver Stone's film "JFK" hadn't even opened when the avalanche began.

Tons and tons of caustic newsprint are being dumped upon the movie by the capitalist media. Typical is the Dec. 15 New York Times. Its entertainment section features an article—"Does 'J.F.K.' Conspire Against Reason?"—spread over more than half the front page and a full inside page. It is written by Tom Wicker, whose liberal byline is supposed to drive any doubters back into the fold.

Newsweek (Dec. 23) devotes its cover to the film. There is nothing ambiguous about the headline: "The Twisted Truth of 'JFK'—Why Oliver Stone's New Movie Can't Be Trusted." When has a mere movie been the subject of such a vitriolic attack?

So far, not one commercial newspaper or TV program has permitted even an inkling of serious consideration of the film's basic premise: that President Kennedy was assassinated by a right-wing conspiracy, which was then covered up by the government and the media.

Can't defend Warren Report

But once you get past the blazing headlines, and the tedious explanations of how a "docudrama" mixes real footage with fiction, you find that even these pillars of the Establishment are hard-pressed to defend the conclusions of the Warren Commission, the political panel hand-

picked by Lyndon Johnson to whitewash the assassination.

The Commission's report had merely endorsed the Dallas police version, finding that Lee Harvey Oswald was a deranged individual with leftist sympathies who had carried out the assassination on his own. It also found nothing sinister in Oswald's assassination two days later while in police custody.

"The film contends that generals, admirals and war profiteers wanted the President dead," writes Wicker of the Times in a tone of amazement. Yet he goes on to admit, "I'm willing to believe that Oswald did not act alone, or that he was innocent of the killing, or that there was a conspiracy. ... After many years of consideration, I doubt that the truth about the Kennedy assassination has yet been told."

What Wicker can't believe, he says, is that the CIA, the FBI and elements of the ultra-right could have been behind it.

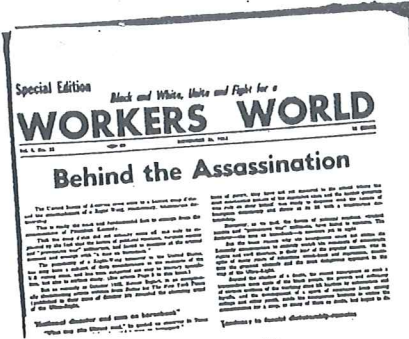
It's no wonder that journalists like Wicker have finally given up trying to defend the Warren report. Despite the monolithic position of the Establishment media, which for nearly 30 years has heaped scorn and abuse on those they call "conspiracy buffs" and "ghouls," every poll shows that most people in this country don't believe the government version. The last poll, taken in May by the Washington Post, revealed that only 19% of the population agreed with the Warren Commission report.

One month after the Kennedy assassination, attorney Mark Lane published a defense brief for Oswald, the kind

Continued on page 7

\$2 TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

WORKERS WORLD NEWSPAPER



What WW said at the time

From Workers World, Nov. 26, 1963:

The United States of America came close to a fascist coup d'état and the establishment of a right-wing, reactionary, totalitarian dictatorship. This is really the main and fundamental fact to emerge from the assassination of President Kennedy.

That the coup d'état did not actually come off can only be explained by the fact that the forces of political reaction, virulent racism and "preventive war" militarism had failed to coalesce at the critical moment and emerge with "a man on horseback."

The possibility of a right-wing takeover in the United States has long been a subject of deep con-

sideration in the summits of the U.S. ruling class. ... As recently as October 1962, Homer Bigart, in an exceptionally illuminating article written from Dallas for the New York Times (published Oct. 10), revealed the alarming trend of the ultra-right.

"What they need," he quoted an observer in Texas as saying, "is a national disaster and a man on horseback."

... The "national disaster" to which they have been hopefully looking forward for a long time is now an accomplished fact. ... But it has thus far fallen short of the hopes of the neo-fascist detachment of the imperialist bourgeoisie. □

Who killed JFK?

Continued from page 1

of document that would have been submitted to the court had there been a trial. But Oswald never got a trial or the chance to tell his story to the public. That was preempted when he was shot to death in Dallas police headquarters by Jack Ruby, a gangster and friend of the cops.

The Lane brief was the first challenge to the government-media account of what had happened. It systematized the doubts many people felt about the "air-tight case" presented to them by the notoriously reactionary and racist Dallas police and FBI.

Citizens Committee of Inquiry

In early 1964 the Citizens Committee of Inquiry was formed to conduct an independent investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Hundreds of volunteers staffed its New York office, arranged speaking engagements for Lane and others, and sifted through the slowly emerging evidence of a conspiracy.

Books and articles began to appear in this country and around the world showing how unbelievable the government's case was against Oswald, and exploring the political backdrop of the assassination.

Many in the progressive movement were rightfully on guard against the idea that JFK, with his promises of "Camelot" and a kinder and gentler society, had transcended his ruling class position and become a true friend of the civil rights and anti-war movements then on the rise. No such naive view was necessary, however, to come to the conclusion that the ultra-right and the intelligence agencies had wanted to get rid of the president.

Kennedy, Cuba and Vietnam

First of all, they were vociferous in their hatred for Kennedy and all the liberals. They blamed Kennedy for the ignominious defeat of their mercenary Cuban troops at the Bay of Pigs. They knew Kennedy had pledged not to stage another invasion of Cuba if Khrushchev pulled out Soviet missiles, and saw that as a monumental sell-out.

The question of the Vietnam War was more cloudy. Whether Kennedy would have pulled U.S. troops out, as is now being argued, or gone on with the war is a matter of speculation. But one thing is sure. The ultra-right, and that includes many in the ruling class as well as in its intelligence agencies, felt they couldn't trust Kennedy. He was too much of a wild card. He had his own power base and fortune, and owed his political success to mass support for a liberal platform.

The assassination, however, was not only meant to remove Kennedy. It was without doubt an attempt at a right-wing, fascist coup, and for that purpose everything was done by the conspirators to make it appear that the Soviet Union and Cuba were involved. It was meant to be the excuse for a right-wing takeover of the government in order to "save America from Communism."

For a day or two, everything hung in the balance and the political leadership in Washington was in disarray. Telephone communications mysteriously broke down for several hours in Washington, D.C. Robert Kennedy disappeared from public view, even though as head of the Justice Department he should have taken charge of the investigation. Lyndon Johnson was hastily sworn in as the new president on the plane from Dallas.

But when it was all over, the constitutional system of government had not been overthrown. A compromise had been reached deep within the military and political councils of the U.S. capitalist ruling class.

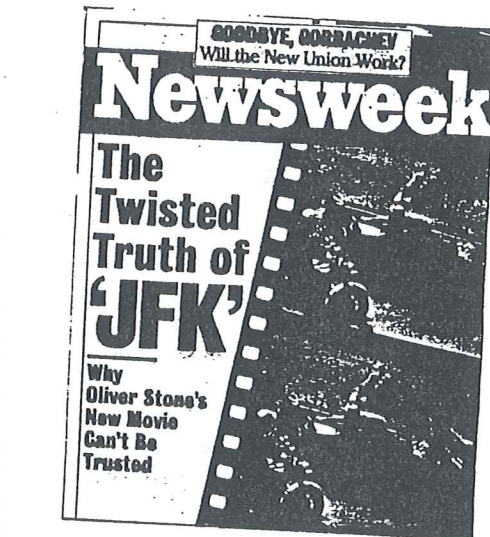
Those with the greatest weight feared the abandonment of bourgeois democracy, which had served their system well. They also must have feared a head-on confrontation with the USSR. They would in the future carry out a more beligerent, aggressive, militarist policy abroad, but they would not risk shaking up the political system by openly gutting the Constitution and allowing a fascist camarilla to seize power.

Somewhat, they had to cobble together an explanation of what had happened that would put to rest the rampant speculation of a coup attempt. They had to rebuild faith in the police and FBI. Johnson called in Earl Warren, head of the Supreme Court, and told him that was his job. Warren emerged with tears in his eyes and reluctantly told the press he would head the commission. Its most active member would be Allen Dulles of the CIA.

Inner struggle continued

During the turbulent period that followed, the instability of the U.S. capitalist government could not be concealed. Johnson himself declined to seek reelection in 1968, and the man seen as sure to succeed him, Robert F. Kennedy, was assassinated just after winning the key California primary. This enabled Nixon to get in, but he was forced to resign in 1974 to escape being impeached.

Again and again throughout this period, the inner struggle within the ruling class would break into the open. There was the publication of the Pentagon Papers, the exposure of the Watergate bur-



This Newsweek cover is typical of the media attacks on the movie 'JFK.' What are they afraid of?

glary, and the revelations of massive police spying, assassinations and dirty tricks against the Black and anti-war movements.

The bitter inside fighting was fueled by the setbacks to U.S. foreign policy in Indochina, the rise of the liberation movements and the socialist countries, and the growth of a mass progressive movement at home, particularly the Black, Latino and Native struggles, the women's and lesbian and gay movements, and the broad and youthful movement against the war.

Until now, the Reagan-Bush years have been characterized by remarkable unity within the U.S. monopoly capitalist ruling class. The launching of the multi-billion-dollar boondoggle Star Wars, the two trillion (!) dollars spent on the military, the massive shift of income to the rich through tax cuts, the anti-labor offensive begun with the

breaking of PATCO and resulting in an enormous depression of wages—all this generated no great opposition from within the ruling circles, as evidenced by the monolithic approval of Reagan and Bush by the giant press and media.

Supposedly, it all worked. Grenada, Panama and Iraq were smashed. Eastern Europe and the USSR buckled. U.S. industry was restructured and "rationalized." Everything seemed to be going fine for U.S. finance capital and for the governmental apparatus that protects its interests.

What did it matter that the question of the Kennedy assassination remained unsettled? Even the publication in recent years of more books with additional evidence of a CIA-FBI-rightist plot didn't seem worthy of much attention from the big-time media.

But with this film, we see a change. Rather than be ignored, it has become the focus of an blistering media attack. Is it because a movie, unlike a book, speaks to the mass of the people and is therefore more dangerous? Is it because there is a new mood of uncertainty and skepticism in the country, generated by an economic crisis that is conjuring up terrifying prospects of poverty and ruin for millions of workers and also many in the middle class?

The economic disasters that are already in the making threaten to break up the unanimity within the ruling class that has lasted for over a decade. If that comes to pass, it will be impossible to keep the skeleton of the Kennedy assassination in the closet. □

Books on JFK assassination

A number of recent books have appeared on the JFK assassination. While they may differ on some minor points, all present abundant evidence to show that right-wingers along with elements in the CIA and FBI participated in the assassination and/or its coverup. Noteworthy are "Plausible Denial" by Mark Lane; "Crossfire—The Plot that Killed Kennedy" by Jim Marrs; and "High Treason" by Robert J. Groden and Harrison Edward Livingstone. □